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NOTES ON NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

X.

BY HARRY C. OBERHOLSER.

IN further continuation of the writer's comments on various North American birds,¹ the following data are offered. These concern four species, belonging to the families Colymbidae, Ardeidae, Megalornithidae, and Scolopacidae.

Colymbus holböllii (Reinhardt).

Holboell's Grebe has for a long time been considered a distinct species. It does not, however, need much study to show that it is but a geographic race of the European and west Asian *Colymbus grisegena* Boddaert,² with which it is identical in color, and from which it differs only in larger size, especially of the bill. Furthermore, this difference of size is only average, since the extremes of all measurements overlap.

The earliest name applied to Holboell's Grebe is *Podiceps rubricollis major* Temminck & Schlegel,³ since the representatives of this species from eastern Asia are the same as those of North America; but so long as the bird remains in the genus *Colymbus* this name of Temminck and Schlegel's is preoccupied by *Colymbus major* Boddaert,⁴ which is now *Aechmophorus major* (Boddaert). Now, however, since this grebe must be removed to the genus *Pedetaithya* Kaup, this name becomes tenable and has priority over *Podiceps holböllii* Reinhardt.⁵ Holboell's Grebe should, therefore, now be known as *Pedetaithya grisegena major* (Temminck and Schlegel).

¹ For previous papers in this series, cf. 'The Auk,' XXXIV, April, 1917, pp. 191-196; XXXIV, July, 1917, pp. 321-329; XXXIV, October, 1917, pp. 465-470; XXXV, January, 1918, pp. 62-65; XXXV, April, 1918, pp. 185-187; XXXV, October, 1918, pp. 463-467; XXXVI, January, 1919, pp. 81-85; XXXVI, July, 1919, pp. 406-408; XXXVI, October, 1919, pp. 556-559.

² Tabl. Planch. Enlum. d'Hist. Nat., 1783, p. 55.

³ Fauna Japonica, 1842, p. 122, pl. 78B (Japan).

⁴ Tabl. Planch. Enlum. d'Hist. Nat., 1783, p. 24.

⁵ *Podiceps Holböllii* Reinhardt, Videnskab. Meddelelser Naturh. For. Kjobenhavn, 1853, Nos. 3-4 (1854), p. 76 (Nenortalik, Julianehaab Dist., Greenland).

***Botaurus lentiginosus* (Montagu).**

The bittern known as *Botaurus lentiginosus*, although the North American representative of the European *Botaurus stellaris*, is a very different bird. It has, however, recently been considered by Dr. Ernst Hartert¹ a subspecies of the latter. It differs conspicuously from *Botaurus stellaris* in the possession of a broad black stripe down the side of the neck, which is represented in *Botaurus stellaris* by only a short rictal stripe of brown or blackish; in the much duller, more uniform upper surface, which is dark brown finely mottled with buffy and ochraceous, instead of, as in *Botaurus stellaris*, black with large, bold, strongly contrasted, bars and streaks of buffy and ochraceous; and particularly in the lack of tawny bars on the primaries, secondaries, and primary coverts, which parts are plain brown, or, at most, with tawny mottlings on the terminal portion. Examination of a series shows that all three of the above characters are constant in every individual and show no indication of the intergradation necessary to reduce *Botaurus lentiginosus* to subspecific rank. Occasional immature specimens of *Botaurus stellaris* have few or no tawny bars on the primaries and secondaries, but this, of course, unless it occurs in adult examples, can not be regarded as evidence of intergradation. There are other differences between *Botaurus lentiginosus* and *Botaurus stellaris*, such as the paler, much more brownish (less blackish) pileum, and the broader, more uniform character of the streaks on the anterior lower parts, but since these differences are not entirely constant they are not of particular interest in the present connection.

In view of the above facts, *Botaurus lentiginosus* is best regarded as a distinct species; and it should thus stand as it has stood in the writings of almost all authorities from the time of its description. Its name, therefore, should continue to be *Botaurus lentiginosus*.

***Grus mexicana* (Müller).**

The Little Brown Crane (*Grus canadensis*)² differs from the Sandhill Crane (*Grus mexicana*)³ only in smaller size, particularly

¹ Hand-List Brit. Birds, 1912, p. 126.

² *Ardea canadensis* Linnaeus, Syst. Nat., ed. 10, I, 1758, p. 141 (Hudson Bay, Canada).

³ *Ardea mexicana* Müller, Natursyst. Suppl., 1776, p. 110 (Mexico).

of the bill. This difference has for a long time been supposed to be so trenchant that no intergradation between the two forms was indicated, and therefore they have been regarded as distinct species. In the course of many years the writer has examined and measured a large number of these birds, and the results obtained show that while typical specimens, and in fact the majority, are readily assignable to one form or the other, the measurements of wing, tail, tarsus, and even bill completely inosculate, and that, therefore, specific distinction cannot be maintained. This view agrees with that of the most recent monographer of the family Gruidae,¹ who considered *Grus mexicana* a subspecies of *Grus canadensis*; while more recently Mr. W. E. C. Todd has conclusively shown² that *Grus nesiotus* Bangs and Zappey³ is but subspecifically distinguishable from *Grus mexicana*.

It may be worth while again to call attention to the undesirability of further continuing the use of the generic name *Grus* Pallas for the cranes, although perhaps sufficient publicity has been given to the matter by Allen,⁴ Mathews,⁵ and Hartert.⁶ The generic name *Grus*, commonly used for the typical cranes, was first proposed by Pallas, in his 'Miscellanea Zoologica,' 1766, p. 66; but here the only species included is *Psophia crepitans*. This latter species becomes, therefore, by monotypy, the type of *Grus*, and *Grus* is, consequently, a synonym of *Psophia*. The only other available name for the cranes is *Megalornis* Gray,⁷ the type of which is, by monotypy, *Ardea grus* Linnaeus.

In view of this and of the fact that the Whooping Crane, commonly called *Grus americana* (Linnaeus) belongs in a separate genus, *Limnogeranus* Sharpe, the American representatives of the genus *Grus*, or, as it should now be, *Megalornis*, will stand as follows:

¹ Brasil, *Genera Avium*, No. XIX, 1913, p. 4.

² *Annals Carnegie Mus.*, X, Nos. 1-2, January, 1916, pp. 205-208.

³ *Amer. Nat.*, XXXIX, No. 4, April, 1905, p. 193 (La Vega, Isle of Pines, Cuba).

⁴ *Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist.*, XXIII, 1907, p. 313.

⁵ *Novit. Zool.*, XVII, No. 3, December 15, 1910, p. 502.

⁶ Hartert, Jourdain, Ticehurst, and Witherby, *Hand-List British Birds*, 1912, p. 210.

⁷ *List Genera and Subgenera of Birds*, 1841, p. 85.

Megalornis canadensis canadensis (Linnaeus).

Megalornis canadensis mexicana (Müller).

Megalornis canadensis nesiotus (Bangs and Zappey).

***Gallinago gallinago delicata* (Ord).**

Although *Gallinago delicata* has been commonly considered a distinct species, several authors have treated it as a race of the Old World *Gallinago gallinago*. Among the most recent of these is Dr. Hartert.¹

The American bird differs from *Gallinago gallinago* chiefly in the possession of 16 instead of 14 rectrices; in having the under wing-coverts much less extensively white, and usually with heavy bars of dusky brown; the axillars regularly and broadly barred with dark brown instead of being almost pure white or only spotted with dusky; and in having the outer pair of rectrices narrower. A recent investigation of all these characters furnishes the following results: the number of tail-feathers in *Gallinago delicata*, although usually 16, is sometimes only 14, while in *Gallinago gallinago*, although usually 14, is not infrequently 16. The under wing-coverts in *Gallinago gallinago* are sometimes as strongly barred with dark brown as in the American bird, although apparently in the latter they never become as nearly pure white as in the European bird. The same remark will apply to the axillars in the two birds. The outer pair of rectrices, though usually broader in *Gallinago gallinago*, is sometimes fully as narrow as in specimens of *Gallinago delicata*. In all these characters *Gallinago delicata* seems to be more stable than *Gallinago gallinago*, lending interest to the suggestion that the latter is a more recent evolution from *Gallinago delicata*. There seems to be, however, from the above discussion no doubt of the propriety of considering *Gallinago delicata* a subspecies of *Gallinago gallinago*, since the latter was the first one described and since there is no single constant character separating the two. The American bird, therefore, should henceforth be known as *Gallinago gallinago delicata* (Ord).

¹ Hand-List British Birds, 1912, p. 190.